



Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

Issue 81
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Revive

a fresh perspective on faith, church and life



Threads of Love

Introducing the 17th President
of the Uniting Church

Uniting Outreach Mandurah

Fifty years of service

Stories from the Pilbara Patrol

Rev David Jackson, Frontier
Services Bush Chaplain

Contents

Features

Stories from the Pilbara Patrol	6
Introducing the 17th President of the Uniting Church	8
Giving a hand up in the land of Papua	12
Uniting Outreach Mandurah	14
Action Planning for Disability Inclusion	17
More than a roof	20
Formation for all	22
U-Team win the State Youth Games	28
Threads of Grace	30

Regulars

From the Moderator	3
Editorial	4
5 minutes with...	5
Agency News	11
School News	24
What's Cooking	26
From the Archives	27
Short News	29

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Moderator

From the Moderator

Anniversaries are times for thanksgiving, for reflecting on what has been, and for looking ahead. The story of the Uniting Church continues.

Which anniversaries are worth celebrating? We seem to have different customs. When it comes to wedding anniversaries, we often emphasise the “large” numbers: 10, 20, 25, 40, 50. With birthdays, each one is treated to its own celebration.

This year the Uniting Church celebrated its 47th birthday. Some of us gathered in the Entertainment Centre on Wellington St in June 1977 for a great celebration of a new beginning in WA. Some remember, many don't. Many of those who made up our membership then are no longer with us. Many new people have come.

An anniversary, when it belongs to a community, belongs to everyone. What we do at anniversaries is re-tell our stories.

The document which created the Uniting Church, the Basis of Union, tells some of the story. The three uniting denominations acknowledged that none of them had followed Jesus

Christ perfectly; they acknowledged that they all saw value going in new directions and committed themselves to go forward together in soul loyalty to Jesus Christ. They acknowledged their context to some degree, acknowledging the Asia/Pacific as the context of ministry and a desire to enter more fully into what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ in this part of the world. The story of the Uniting Church continues.

Over time, gaps in how we have told the story of our life and faith have become more obvious.

Thirty years ago, in 1994, the Assembly and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (which had begun the moves towards its establishment in 1982 and was formed in 1985) entered a Covenant. We are still working out what this means for us. The story continues.

Then in 2009, a Preamble was added to the Constitution of the Uniting Church which points us to what it means to be the Uniting Church in Australia. It reflects further on the experience of Australia's First and its many Second Peoples.



Rev Dr Ian Tozer
 Moderator, Uniting Church WA

We look back - 47th, 30th and 15th - these are all important anniversaries, and we look ahead. There is always more to learn, to understand, more awareness to develop about our strengths and failings. The Uniting Church was born acknowledging that it had far to go, that it is always a pilgrim church. It acknowledged its failings and its dependence on God's grace, and it looked ahead with hope.

We are still called to go forward together as a pilgrim people in sole loyalty to Jesus Christ. The story continues.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer
 Moderator, Uniting Church WA



Being with Jesus
in Ministry



Some readers may be aware of my love of crochet. It's a craft passed onto me from my grandmother and mother. Crochet, along with being a handy skill for keeping my family warm, has been a relaxing way to pass time, a therapy when times have been difficult, and a way I can give back to the community.



In July I was thankful for the opportunity to be a member of the 17th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. The theme of the 17th Assembly is *Threads of love, Weaving Christ's love across cultures and boundaries*. Uniting Church in Australia President Rev Charissa Suli chose this theme for her triennium in drawing upon the honoured Tongan tradition of weaving the fala (mat). She has reflected on the ideas of 'weaving the mat so there is space for all' and also for 'the church to "unweave" the strands that hinder us'. (You can read more about Charissa and her theme on our page 8 article *Introducing the 17th President of the Uniting Church*.)

As we gathered together daily as a community of faith, in worship, prayer, listening, discussion and discernment I was inspired by the vibrant diversity of this church I have been a part of since Union.

As someone who likes to travel with my crochet, I naturally brought a project with me to work on during some of the sessions, and looking around the room was delighted by the variety of crafting taking place on the different tables. Many of us worked on the 'Hats for the Homeless' project led by a dedicated group of volunteers who hand out beanies to people experiencing homelessness around Sydney. It felt good to have a purpose for my crafting. Although not quite the same as 'weaving the mat', I felt the connection between the theme, and the concepts of community gathering and creating something new from the simple act of weaving, looping and knotting threads of yarn. Sometimes when things go wrong, rows need to be undone, sometimes the finished product doesn't quite fit the intended purpose and needs to be repurposed or taken apart to start again. Weaving and unweaving.

I was also reminded of the many craft groups in our churches and communities who gather together making blanket squares and beanies for people sleeping rough, toys for kids in hospital, feminine hygiene products (Days for Girls), and other items for people in need.

Not everyone enjoys craft of course, and there are many examples of people giving a range of gifts and skills to the church and community. In this edition of Revive we read about Rev David Jackson who is currently serving in the Pilbara as a Bush Chaplain, we share stories from Uniting Outreach Mandurah whose volunteers offer care and hospitality to people in need in their local community, and we read about the volunteers of the Black Pearl Network here and in Papua helping to create change by sharing the gift of education. These and many more actions big and small are all examples of the threads of love and grace that flow through our Uniting Church communities and beyond.

As a community of Christ we all bring something unique to weave into the fabric of our church.

Grace and peace,

Wendy Hendry, Editor



5 minutes with... Ned Radov



Ned Radov

Ned has been working with the Uniting Church Presbytery of WA since September 2023 as Presbytery Support Administrator. His role supports the work of the Presbytery and its Committees.

What led you to working for the Uniting Church?

For 22 years, I worked as a disability support worker. Working part-time allowed me to explore other activities, including film and video production. However, I wanted a change to something more administrative and a role that allowed me to help more people than the one-on-one support I was providing.

The opportunity with the Uniting Church came through a connection in the office. Without this connection, I wouldn't have considered it, nor would the office I suspect, as my administrative experience is limited and my broader knowledge more than what they were looking for, but it's turned out to be a great fit.

I enjoy working with the people around me and those beyond the office, and I'm glad to be contributing in my own way.

What is something you have learnt about the Uniting Church?

It's a complex organisation! The multitude of committees and the way they interact, the different roles and focuses of synod and presbytery, the blend of staff, ministers, volunteers; complex!

What has been the most challenging or surprising thing in your work role so far?

The challenging part is understanding this organisation's machinations. It's complex and after ten months I'm still asking questions about how things work (I've been warned that I'll be asking for many years yet!).

That it does work could be considered surprising, but I'm appreciating that a lot of it is due to the enormous work the volunteers do.

So we have nine paid presbytery staff doing their best to support six presbytery committees, about 100 congregations and faith communities, more than a 150 ministers (some retired but still active), pastors and lay preachers.

The volunteers are key, from the Chair of Presbytery to committee members, church council members and all those volunteering in their own way in their congregations. How much they all do is probably the most surprising thing.



What's your favorite way to spend your days off? Do you have a hobby or special interest?

I like to relax on my days off and that could mean any number of things. A hot beverage in hand reading up on the latest tech and gadgets, watching a movie with my wife, spending time with family (though not necessarily relaxing!). Essentially, I like to slow down on my days off but I keep busy tinkering with tech (my wife asks why I have so many laptops and gadgets!), enjoying films and meditating.

If you could travel anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?

My wife is from Beijing originally and we are planning a trip there in September this year. It's been six years since I was last there, just before COVID, so I'm looking forward to seeing family and how much the place has changed.

I've been twice before and it's great staying with family as it offers amazing insight into what it's like living like a local. Beijing is both super modern and super old and makes for a fascinating journey into a culture that's surprisingly more welcoming than we're led to believe.



Stories from the Pilbara Patrol

Rev David Jackson, Frontier Services Bush Chaplain

The Pilbara Patrol covers an area double the size of Victoria. Each month the average patrol takes in excess of 2000km. When I commenced the placement I identified several lines of operation – connecting with the variety of community services in the region, visiting the community centers to assess where the greatest need is, regular visitation to stations and roadhouses, attending community events to promote Frontier Services, promotion of the patrol on social media and assessing the utility of using the vacant Uniting Church buildings as community centres.

My wife Diane and I have made great connections with the community of Tom Price to engage with community groups as volunteers. The Community Garden and the State Emergency Services are two such organisations that we volunteer for. We have each forged a place for ourselves within the life of that community - not that we spend a lot of time there.

I visit the Wakuthuni Aboriginal Community, 20km out of Tom Price, where I meet up with First Nations Peoples being supported by Nintiri Community Nurse and other community services. I also support the Fun Box, an initiative of Nintiri to support disadvantaged young people who find it challenging to fit into mainstream school or who have other profound struggles.

When we arrived in Tom Price in January it was the hottest time of the year with temperatures soaring into the high 40's for days on end. What's more we have had to live in our own caravan while the church hall is made livable for us as a home. The Manse had been leased to a private organisation and was not available for us to move into. We are still living in our caravan with no end in sight as to when we will be able to move in.

We were not going to let the issue of being homeless distract us from the work we are there to do. I have been able to connect with community organisations and Aboriginal Corporations offering my services to provide support and pastoral care to the many communities Di and I visit on regular patrols. We have been able to connect with a small but thriving faith community in Pannawonica, offering activities



David Jackson Bush Chaplain in the Pilbara.

for children while engaging with the adults. One of the highlights was to share in an event promoting Frontier Services at a Big BBQ. We had activities for the children to do. I have acquired some resources to hold a regular Bible study when we visit the community to support and encourage them.

The communities of Marble Bar and Nullagine are reasonably close to one another and a long way from just about everywhere else. The road to Nullagine in all directions is unsealed. There is an airfield frequented by the RFDS and roaming cattle that sometimes get in the way of approaching aircraft. These communities are home to a number of First Nations families. I make regular visits to these communities to ensure they know that we stand with them and that we care.

We are always looking for opportunities to value-add to the life of these places. Di, for example, has been able to provide valuable support to the Marble Bar school by volunteering in the library sorting and cataloging the collection. She has been welcomed with open arms

for her generous support to the school. I am working with a small group of people in Marble Bar in a locally led initiative to support the youth of the town. One of the town's people commented to me that I am the first minister they have seen in Marble Bar in two years. That indicated to me that they were positively affirming that it was good for the town to see us.

In Hedland we have connected with a group of Fijian Christians (CALD) that meet in homes every Sunday to worship in their own language following their traditional customs. They have connections with the Uniting Church and are looking at being received as a congregation of the Uniting Church in the future. They approached me to see if they could use the Uniting Church building in Port Hedland to worship there and conduct outreach to the Hedland communities. So far, they have received positive support from the Presbytery and Synod. They are hoping to be able to conduct their services at the Uniting Church in Port Hedland from the first Sunday in October. October is an important month for Fijians - Fiji Week is a week of festivities culminating in Fiji Day on 10 October annually. It marks the day Fiji gained its independence from British Colonial rule on 10 October, 1970.

The most northern reaches of the Patrol are Sandfire Roadhouse and 80 Mile Beach. On ANZAC Day I conducted an ANZAC Day service at

80 Mile Beach that my predecessor had started when he arrived in the patrol a decade before. 120 people attended the service with people from the park and surrounding stations in attendance. On 18 August I will return to 80 Mile Beach to commemorate Long Tan Day (Vietnam Veterans Day). There is a special connection that Vietnam Veterans have with this park and many of them will converge there on this day to remember their fallen comrades. The design of the cross at the memorial is a replica of the cross that stands on the ground at Long Tan that both Di and I visited in 2018. These are occasions that the presence of Frontier Services Bush Chaplains are most appreciated – a non-judgmental presence, standing with people in all sorts of situations, especially in the sadness, as people reflect on the sacrifices a few have made for the many.

Some people ask how I have come to be doing this role as a Bush Chaplain in the Pilbara. The simple answer is that I was asked. The Patrol had been vacant for 12 months since the beloved Patrol Padre, Rev John Dihm retired. Getting the right fit for any patrol is important and I expect my long career as a military chaplain would have prepared me well for this role. There certainly are a lot of similarities – working with people of all denominations and faiths including none; being willing to take the first step to approach people and say g'day; up-skilling in Mental

Health First Aid, Psychological First Aid, Resilience and Suicide Intervention as well as Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy. In this role you are standing with people in all sorts of situations, in grief and loss, and in joys and successes.

I came out of retirement two years ago taking up a similar placement in the Mid-West of WA after tropical cyclone Seroja. I didn't think I would come out of retirement but there was no one willing to put their hand up to do the job. My beautiful wife dobbed me in. She encouraged me to apply and that set me on this path. Just 18 months into that job I was then approached about filling the vacancy in the Pilbara. We have not looked back since. It has been a roller coaster ride full of excitement and challenge.

Some would say that this is faith - that God has led me along this path. I say that God does place the needs of people in our hearts and we respond to the call. Whichever way you look at it, God's hand is in it. It often takes a little nudge by an influential person to open you up to the possibility of taking on such challenges. For me, that person was my friend and colleague, Rev John Dihm with encouragement from my wife, Diane.



David and Di hosting a Big BBQ in Marble Bar.



David at the ANZAC Day Service, 80 Mile Beach.

Introducing the 17th President of the Uniting Church

Wiradjuri man and artist Uncle Tom Sloane from the Synod of NSW/ACT offers a gift to President Rev Charissa Suli as a symbol of Covenant made from the boori (wattle) tree.

Rebecca Beisler

For Rev Charissa Suli it was an Emmaus moment. On the short road between Collaroy and Dee Why on Sydney's Northern Beaches, Charissa felt a deep and unshakeable call from God to dedicate her life to serving Christ within the Uniting Church.

It was 29 October 2007. Charissa was 25, a young mum of three daughters. A few years before Charissa and her husband Langi made a pivotal decision to return "home" to the faith community where Charissa was baptised - the Uniting Church's Cecil Gribble Tongan Congregation in Dee Why, named after a beloved missionary to Tonga. They soon became involved in youth group, Sunday School and lay preaching. As a young leader with an exceptional gift for singing, Charissa was invited by Rev Salesi Faupula (now Moderator-elect of the Vic/Tas Synod) to attend a NSW/ACT Synod Cross Cultural event at Collaroy and lead worship. Charissa clearly remembers not wanting to go, suspecting the occasion would be predominantly for people much older and unlike her.

However, she went along with Langi and two other young adults. And it changed her life.

In a surprising and enlightening way, Charissa found herself at a truly multicultural event.

"I was taken aback that a lot of the people leading at the front were actually migrant women," Charissa recalls. Korean Minister Rev Aeryun Lee presented a session in the morning. It was the first time Charissa had seen an Asian female minister. In the afternoon, Fijian-Rotuman minister Rev Dr Seforosa Carroll led a Bible study.

"I remember sitting there listening to Sef. She was inspiring and I was like, 'Wow! She's a Pacific Islander, and she's a Rev! She looks so young!' And I remember from that moment, I thought, I could do that."

On that day Charissa also met Rev Dr Tony Floyd, then Assembly Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry National Director. It was the beginning of a friendship and

mentorship that would open the door for Charissa to the wider national church and begin her thinking about her identity as a Second-Generation Tongan woman.

So, on the way home, a short 5km drive from Collaroy to Dee Why, Charissa tells Langi to pull over on the side of the road.

"I say to him, there is this thing I need to tell you. I am crying my eyes out, and he says to me, I know what you're going to say. And I say to him, 'look, I just need to tell you', and we both turn to each other. I say, 'I want to become a minister', and Langi says to me, 'you should become a minister'. It literally was the Emmaus Walk where our hearts were on fire."

In this defining moment Charissa's journey of ministry and service began, culminating this year in an historic moment in the life of the Uniting Church. In July,

Rev Charissa Suli [was] installed as the 17th President of the Uniting Church. She [is] the first person of colour, of Pacifica heritage, and of Tongan descent, to lead the church nationally and the youngest to serve in the role.

At a time of great challenge, Charissa will offer spiritual leadership to the national Church. In doing so, she will draw upon her deep faith in Jesus and her Pacifica heritage, both of which have played a central and grounding role through seemingly impossible challenges on her path to leadership.

In the 1970s, Charissa's grandparents left Tonga for New Zealand with their 12 children, sacrificing all they had for the sake of future generations. They arrived at a time of strident racism when Pacific migrants were targeted in what became known as the "dawn raids"; sporadic on-the-spot checks for visa papers, often in the early hours of the morning. Through all this, the family worked hard to establish themselves, and went on to help establish the Tongan-speaking church in New Zealand in a suburb called Otahuhu, working closely with the Pākehā (European) Methodist Church of New Zealand.

Charissa was born in Australia and schooled in New Zealand, until she and her mother returned to Australia to be closer to her elder brother, who was having his first child. However, at 16-years-old, Charissa's indomitable spirit was forged in the crucible of early motherhood. She married Langi and gave birth to their baby girl, Susitina.

"It changed the whole narrative of my life. I had no choice but to drop out of high school," Charissa recalls. "I was a child having a child. I grew up very quickly."

Carrying the shame of a teenage pregnancy, Charissa describes the years that followed as a time of "wilderness".

"There was so much heavy baggage. Life was so hard. We felt so poor. The thing that held tight, I truly believe, for myself and Langi and our family, was our faith in God."

With the foundational support of her mother, her husband and her

deep faith, Charissa forged a path ahead. She became successful in finance and marketing. Charissa and Langi had two more daughters, Kina and Latu, and more recently, a son, Azariah Inoke.

Fast forward to 2007 and having just experienced a powerful call to ministry, Charissa made the decision to quit her job, forgo her six-figure salary and begin a Period of Discernment. Again, Charissa pushed back against cultural expectations and boundaries, with many questioning her sense of call.

"Charissa says the theme of the 17th Assembly, Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries also calls the church to "unweave" the strands that hinder us."

"The voices I'd received at that time, were 'you're a woman, it shouldn't be you, it should be your husband'. 'You're too young.' 'You faced teenage pregnancy'. All that shame came up again."

"The key point for me is that as Christians and people of faith we underestimate how broad, wide and deep the love of Christ is and that Christ's love is so powerful that it can hold our diversity, if we would just take a chance and allow Christ's love to transform us from within."

Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries

As well as weaving the mat so there is space for all, Charissa says the theme of the 17th Assembly, Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries also calls the church to "unweave" the strands that hinder us.

"The theme calls for self-reflection and action to address the broken strands, in our society and in the Church. This involves identifying areas of inequality and injustice, lamenting past wrongs and working actively towards healing and transformation."

For Charissa, one of the greatest challenges the Church must face is its own structural and cultural racism.

"I believe a lot of the structural racism is unconscious in the Church, and because we're not aware of it, it actually hinders how we be in relationship. We need to dismantle structural racism, ensuring that the commitments we've made are not just symbolic but deeply embedded in our governance and practices."

This starts with how we can be in better relationship with the First Peoples of this country and with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, says Charissa.

"I truly believe until First Nations feel and find their voice in the Uniting Church, only then can we Second Peoples find our voice too. That needs to be our first priority."





Further, Charissa names the importance of crossing cultural divides. As a proud Tongan, Charissa has long been an advocate for the culturally diverse voices of the church to be elevated and celebrated. A more intercultural church is an enriched church.

"When people say the Church is dying, it is often focused on a particular group of the Church which is predominantly the white Anglo communities. When I look at the CALD communities, they are growing their number, impact and mission. You can see intergenerational age groups. That is not dying."

"I believe migrants and Indigenous communities have the opportunity to influence how we offer hospitality and be in relationship with each other in the Uniting Church. This journey requires a commitment to ongoing reformation and renewal and the space for grace."

"It's not to say the Western way is wrong, and the Pacific way is right. We've got to be open to having

that talanoa (dialogue) and building stronger relationships and being open for a new thread to be woven into the tapestry of the Uniting Church that will look different and sound different.

As we do this healing, transformation and reconciliation is inevitable as we extend the tapestry of the fala to reflect an inclusive church where no single thread holds dominance. Each individual thread that contributes to the fala is significant and represents the love of Christ".

"The theme calls for self-reflection and action to address the broken strands, in our society and in the Church. This involves identifying areas of inequality and injustice, lamenting past wrongs and working actively towards healing and transformation."

"It's about also giving the opportunity and recognising the leadership that migrant and Indigenous communities have to offer to the church. It's not about pushing out those who have been here for generations and generations. It's about how do we do this together. We need each other but we must take the time to learn from each other. It will be a joyful and painful journey, but our diversity will be a resource for how we be the Church together."

Another part of Charissa's vision is for greater focus on discipleship.

"More and more young people are curious, and they have questions and want to be in dialogue about

their spirituality and faith journey. We need to invest in the next generation, our children, our youth and young adults. We want to be known as the intergenerational church, but we are not investing in that."

Charissa says she hopes to work with emerging leaders to offer leadership at a national level.

"It is my hope, that as President, people will be inspired by the voices that we don't normally get to hear, and people will be inspired or encouraged knowing they can speak into the life of the Church, and they do have a voice."

"It's saying to the Church, our young people are here. This is what it looks like when you give them the opportunity to lead."

Looking back now on the Emmaus experience on the road from Collaroy to Dee Why, Charissa is still in awe at the journey God has taken her to this day.

"I still can't believe it. But I do believe we are in awe, and we're always surprised at what God is doing. I truly believe that my calling into this next stage of my ministry, it's more than me. It's actually about what God is doing in the life of our Church. Because that's how radical the love of Christ is. God calls the ordinary, you know, the everyday, the young mum, who was happy just to finish theological college. And then God takes you to another height and ministry. I honestly bring it back to what God is doing. And we need to pay attention to what God is doing. But I do recognise it comes with responsibility."

"I still can't wrap my head around it, it's unbelievable but I'm humbled as I stand on the shoulders of giants who have come before me."

Rev Charissa Suli was installed as the 17th President at the triennial meeting of the Uniting Church on 11 July 2024 at St Stephen's Uniting Church in Macquarie Street, Sydney.



Art and laughs make Ken the richest guy around

Hannah Campbell, Juniper

"I go to bed knowing the next day is going to be the best day I ever had because I get to paint," says Ken Rich, who continues to bring contagious enthusiasm and humour to his 90 years.

"I think I'm the top rung of the ladder for happiness. This is a new chapter in our lives, and we're having the time of our life," Ken says of he and wife, Vanda.

Ken's been painting his whole life. Starting school from the front room of a house amidst the chaos of a World War II London, he can remember loving art. He still has remarkable pencil portraits he drew as an 11-year-old.

"I wanted to go to art college but if I did, I'd likely just be smoking marijuana," Ken laughs. Instead, he directed his imagination into horticulture.

"My creative drive has always been there. As a landscape designer, I still got to be creative on paper. I had a long list of clients, including celebrities here in Perth. I ended my career on 7776 designs - I didn't want to end on a 7," he says.

"While I can't garden anymore, I keep taking cuttings. Can't stop, won't stop."

Ken applies a no limits philosophy to his art. He dabbles in pencil, water colour and acrylic across nature,

architecture, caricatures and portraits. He always like to inject comedy into his work.

"Cat's faces, dog's faces, bird's faces, people's faces. It doesn't matter what I do, it's always fun to add that comedy, after all, humour is what makes the world tick over."

He points to an artwork of his latest phase, a compilation of blue wrens with comical expressions.

"I have so many choices of what to do next, I'm quite set on doing humorous animals at the moment and I quite like this baby kookaburra," Ken says, flicking through his daily sketch book.

Ken and Vanda, described by Ken as being in "a 65-year romance," arrived in Australia over half a century ago.

"I remember when I was about eight years old squatting in the assembly room at school on Empire Day and they showed us a film that said 'come to Australia'. From then, I always knew I would go," he says.

"Vanda and I came across as 10-pound poms, but we came to Queensland it was just too hot. We returned to England, and then in 1974 came back to live in Perth.

"I'm such a lucky guy, when we got to Perth I approached a wildflower nursery and they gave me a job and a house, where Harry Butler (the

famous naturalist and presenter of ABC television series In the Wild) was our next door neighbour."

Upon retiring, Ken and Vanda restored a derelict cottage in Darlington and were involved in the community through the Darlington Arts Festival. Seeking a smaller property, the couple moved into a retirement village and upon advice from his GP, sought a Home Care Package with Juniper.

"Juniper has been brilliant to us, absolutely brilliant. At the start they brought in an occupational therapist who was able to recommend things that made our life safer, stuff we never would have thought of like a magnet to keep the door open when we are negotiating our walkers through, and these chairs which are so much easier to get in and out of.

"Initially the personal care, like showering, for a guy it was like having to cross a big bridge, but the carer was so good and I was able to get over it.

"Every week Jenny comes in for physiotherapy and we do exercises to help with balance.

"I've got an army of Juniper people because while my mind is active, the feet don't always follow the mind. It all means we are able to stay at home and I can keep painting a picture a day."



Ross Gobby with BPEC teachers at the 2024 Teachers Conference.

Giving a hand up in the land of Papua

Kerry Povey

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” - Nelson Mandela.

The indigenous Papuan people have struggled to maintain their identity and retain control of their land since Papua became a province of Indonesia in the 1960's. At the time, a transmigration program was established, and many thousands of people moved from other parts of Indonesia every week, mainly from the Javanese islands. Native Papuans are now outnumbered by migrants, are disadvantaged in many ways, and struggle to achieve similar economic development.

The Black Pearl Network (BPN) grew out of an appeal for support and partnership by the Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (GKI TP) to the Uniting Church of Australia. The BPN project started with members of All Saints Floreat Uniting Church, and is now also strongly supported by Trinity North Uniting Church and other generous donors in partnership with the Uniting Church WA and the Uniting Church partner in Papua, GKI TP.

The Papuan people being supported through the Black Pearl Network have now also founded their own official organisation: Yayasan Mutiara Hitam Papua / Black Pearl Papua Foundation (BPPF).

The aim of the Black Pearl Papua Foundation (BPPF) in Papua is to use the impact of education to assist the Papuan people to make changes in a peaceful way. In Papua we can see the impact of education in action. Education is the way out of poverty for many of our Papuan friends and opens doors to employment in areas of influence in their country, and communication with others outside.

The Black Pearl English Course (BPEC) began back in 2015 with a single centre in the remote Papuan village of Sarmi. Under the energetic guidance of BPN volunteer Ross Gobby and others it was not long before several more centres opened. Now nine years on there are 14 centres scattered across the various Papuan provinces.

At the time of writing this article, Ross Gobby and Robert Hoskin (Uniting Church member based in St Kilda, Victoria) were attending

the yearly BPEC teachers' conference in Jayapura. This conference is one of the ways that the BPPF in Papua is ensuring a high standard of English language tuition. BPEC teachers spent two weeks of their mid-year break discussing topics such as the new teaching resources, the Pelangi curriculum.

The new material, backed up by textbooks, student workbooks, on-line resources for both teachers and students creates a new curriculum and uniform teaching and assessment guidelines across all the teaching centres. The new syllabus has required a large investment by the Black Pearl Network in Australia but the potential benefits to both teachers and students are enormous.

The new Pelangi curriculum covers a full range of levels from beginners through to advanced (university level) and will ensure consistently high standards of teaching throughout all the BPEC centres. This has been another significant, though essential expense for the organisation. It is estimated that implementation of the program will cost approximately \$10 000. BPN

Australia has set up a GoFundMe page to cover the costs.

You may be wondering why English language education is so important in Papua? A high level of English language competence allows Indonesian students to qualify for tertiary level scholarships funded by both the Indonesian Government and by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Such scholarships enable students to study in many English-speaking countries such as the UK, USA, NZ, Australia and even in some European countries. The opportunity to engage in overseas education is highly prized and brings great educational, economic and business benefits to Papua upon the students' return.

Many of the BPEC teachers have been awarded Australian and Indonesian government scholarships to study English in other regions of Indonesia. Some are currently in Bali and others will take up scholarships later in the year. Supporting teachers with ongoing study such as this is another important way that BPEC is constantly cultivating the program to deliver high level tuition.

As you can imagine you can't run a project this size on peanuts! In fact, in previous years the annual budget was over \$100 000. Recent budget constraints have led to structural changes within the organisation. It has been necessary

for teachers to start collecting fees from students who can afford to contribute towards their lessons. Collecting fees is also important for the long-term sustainability of the project. Those involved with BPN in Australia are not getting any younger! The introduction of low, affordable tuition fees is the first step towards setting up a system that will survive beyond involvement of supporters in Australia.

Not all BPEC students come from affluent backgrounds, in fact many of the students come from a background of extreme poverty. It is important to offer scholarships to these students as it is essential to the ethos of the BPPF that no-one who wants to study be excluded. The BPN in Australia is currently looking for sponsors for these scholarships. It costs just \$10 per month to sponsor a student - you can't get much more than a cup of coffee for that these days! \$10 per month even includes the cost of the new Pelangi student workbook for the student to take home and complete their classwork.

The friendships made in Papua have proved to be lasting, and the ongoing relationship between the Black Pearl Network and the various klasis (presbyteries) with which we work there are warm and co-operative. Through the Black Pearl Network, the Uniting Church WA maintains a very active partnership with the Synod of

the GKI TP church in the Papuan provinces of Indonesia. It's a partnership which delivers highly valued benefits to all of us on both sides of the Arafura Sea.

If you would like to find out more about student sponsorship please contact Kerry Povey, Chair of the International Partnerships and Development Commission - kerry@povey.net.au



Young adult Papuan students enjoying their English class with teacher, Yunitha.



Fifty Years of Service to the Mandurah Community

Wendy Hendry

In the heart of Mandurah, the Mandurah Uniting Church shares their love of Christ out into the surrounding community in a shared mission of compassion and support. This year the church is celebrating 50 years of support to the Mandurah community through its service now known as Uniting Outreach Mandurah. On a recent visit to Mandurah I was shown around the centre by Coral Richards, a dedicated volunteer who has been part of this journey for over three decades, and was struck by the profound impact this organisation has had on the lives of so many.

Although the Mandurah congregation began as a Methodist Church in the 1930's, the support services, now named Uniting Outreach Mandurah, has a story which began fifty years ago in

1974. That year, some ladies of the Methodist Church gathered some boxes of secondhand clothes which they sold from a pop-up stall they would set up on a Wednesday from the old church building in Sutton Street. A few years later at Uniting Church in Australia union they became the Mandurah Uniting Church, and the members of the congregation have continued to serve and support the surrounding community to this day.

When the old manse on Pinjarra Road was vacated it became the site for a combined Drop-in Centre and Op Shop, outreach services of the church staffed by volunteers of the congregation. The new church building opened next door at 156 Pinjarra Rd in 1984. The old manse was eventually demolished and a shed was built at the rear of the church in 2007. In the same year Uniting Outreach Mandurah (UOM) was officially established as a registered charity to oversee the outreach projects of the church.

UOM serves as a lifeline for those in need, providing emergency relief and support services to individuals and families facing hardship. The overarching vision for UOM is 'to give a helping hand to the people of the Peel area as a response of our Christian love'. Their core values are to 'be compassionate towards people in times of physical, emotional and financial need' and 'to promote justice and hope within the community'.

UOM currently has three major outreach programs; Uniting Op Shop, Emergency Relief and Well Being Lunches.

Every Tuesday morning the church on Pinjarra road is open for the UOM Emergency Relief Support Program. People seeking support can arrive between 10am to 1pm without being required to make an appointment. Upon arrival they are welcomed by a friendly team of volunteers who offer clients a warm cuppa, and invite them to select

free bread products donated by a local bakery. Clients are triaged depending on need, with some of the more experienced volunteers on hand for more complex support needs. The service primarily assists those with a healthcare card and who reside within the region, adhering to the funding requirements set by Lotterywest, though they do have some ability to assist people outside of these constraints. The team at UOM remain committed in their mission, doing their best to ensure that no one is turned away empty-handed during times of crisis.

The emergency relief service has a range of support to offer including the provision of food hampers, Foodbank referrals, vouchers for fuel, assisting with school uniforms and student hygiene packs, and vouchers for the on-site Op Shop, along with transport cards and

rent assistance. There are policies and procedures in place for these services which are followed by the volunteers. They also work in partnership with other agencies who often refer clients to them, and in turn UOM can refer to other agencies when appropriate.

Every second Wednesday UOM hosts a Well-Being lunch. The lunches provide a safe and supportive space for people experiencing mental health issues to socialise over a nutritious meal. Attendance ranges from 24 – 40 people each time, making food preparation and planning a little challenging. A team of volunteers prepare the meals, offer support to the clients and clean up again afterwards.

The Op-Shop is open five days a week, selling donated items at low

cost to the community. Over time the Op-Shop has expanded out to three storage locations on the property for clothing and accessories, household goods and a furniture shed for bulky items. They are mindful to ensure the shop and furniture shed have well defined walkways to be accessible for wheelchairs and prams. There is also a storage container and staff workspace. A team of volunteers sort through the donated items and prepare them for display in the shop according to the season.

Volunteering at the Heart of UOM

The heart and soul of Uniting Outreach Mandurah is its volunteers. With around 40 dedicated individuals, the organisation runs smoothly, thanks to their unwavering commitment. Many volunteers are connected to the church, and some are from the broader community.



Uniting Outreach Mandurah
Our Staff are Volunteers.
If you would like to volunteer
please ask about positions.

Uniting Outreach Mandurah
**All Funds Raised
are Kept in the
Mandurah Area**

Uniting Outreach Mandurah
We support the Mandurah Community
Emergency Relief:
School Uniforms & School Lunches,
Food Hampers, referrals to Food Bank,
Fortnightly Well Being Lunches



The volunteer program is robust, currently supported by a three-year community grant with the City of Mandurah. This grant has enabled the partnership with the Peel Volunteer Resource Centre, which manages recruitment of volunteers, ensuring candidates undergo the necessary safety screening and initial induction requirements, as well as assisting with recruitment and rostering.

Regular team meetings and informal training sessions ensure that volunteers are well-prepared to handle various situations, from dealing with difficult customers to adhering to safety protocols.

During my visit to the centre I spoke to several long-term volunteers. Some volunteers, like Keith, who manages the bookkeeping and has been involved for 25 years, and Andrew who has been a part of the congregation since 1985 and helps out with shopping errands and other odd jobs as well as helping out in the Op-Shop. There are many more recent volunteers such as Michelle who recently retired from

her previous employment and now helps in the office with data entry and lends a helping hand to the Well Being lunches when needed.

Coral herself has been an active member of the Mandurah Uniting Church for 30 years and is currently the Secretary of the Church Council. Her passion for the outreach services of UOM is clear in the way she speaks with a sense of pride in the place of hope and compassion they have become in the local community.

Coral said "We try as best we can to respond to need, and to bring hope to people in the community."

When asked how people in the wider church community could support the work of UOM Coral said, "We're always open to donations." Coral went on to say how helpful items such as formal clothes suitable for high school Balls are, noting that for some families finding special occasion clothing for events can be out of reach. They have a School Ball section in the Op Shop for such items.

Coral also said, "if there's people in our local community who would like to support us by becoming a Board member or volunteering their time that would be fabulous."

50 Year Celebrations

To mark this 50-year milestone, Mandurah Uniting Church are planning to have a celebration Sundowner / Afternoon Tea on 20 September to share the history with people in the church and community. We look forward to sharing the details of this celebration with the Uniting Church WA community soon.

You can find out more about Uniting Outreach Mandurah, including how to contribute to the ongoing work, on the church's website – mandurah.ucwa.au



Let's have ACTION Planning for Disability Inclusion!

In September 2023 the Synod approved the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy. The Disability Synod Task Group members have been working steadily on the 2024-2027 Disability Access and Inclusion (DAI) Action Plan to ensure that the Policy is put into action across the WA Synod.



Cindy Gorton

The Theology of Inclusion

We come to this space through a belief that people with disabilities have hopes, dreams and desires, the same as everyone else. "The relationship between spirituality and disability evokes deep reflection regarding our unique, diverse and authentic ways of being human" state the editors of the book *Reflective Being, Being Reflective*.¹ They go on to say that "as relational beings we do not travel alone...It is the spiritual and relational reflections evoked by contemplating spirituality and disability that also influence our actions with others."

They ask us to consider seriously "Who do we accept or reject; respect or oppress; embrace or exclude; celebrate or critique; engage or ignore... in our lives, communities and/or congregations."

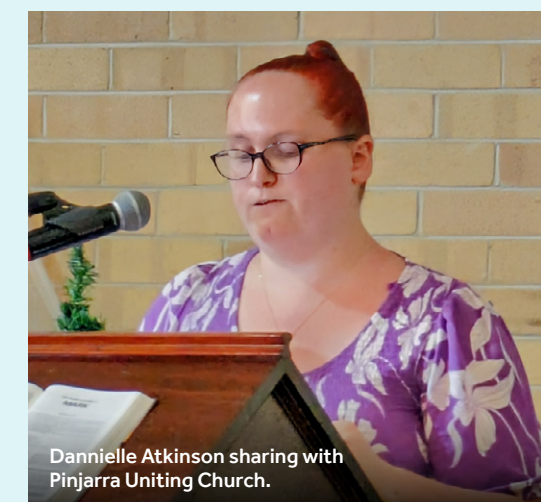
It is worth taking the time to reflect and recognise when we have responded with a negative attitude or prejudice towards people with disability that may have harmed

them psychologically, emotionally or spiritually and next time to make a conscious decision to respond in a more open, accepting and welcoming way.

We are reminded that in 2018 the 15th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia affirmed that:

- a. Christ is most fully present when all people in the Body are unconditionally accepted as people of worth. All people are created in the image of God, including people with disability;
- b. along with all members, the faith, gifts, hopes and dreams of people with disability are to be valued and honoured; and,
- c. God is a God of justice and peace, who seeks reconciliation amongst all people.

Uniting Church in Australia, Statement of Access and Welcome



Dannielle Atkinson sharing with Pinjarra Uniting Church.



Robbie Muir and Gill sharing in the service at Pinjarra Uniting Church.

¹ Editors: Calder, A., Clapton, J., Parmenter, J., *Reflective Being, Being Reflective: 25 years of multi-faith perspectives on disability and spirituality in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, 2022, p 8.

Aims of the Action Plan

The Action Plan aims to put into practice the objectives set out in the Policy and hopefully informs how we responsibly, respectfully and actively walk alongside people with a disability in the Uniting Church to achieve their hopes, dreams and desires.

Robbie Muir, who lives with disability, and is a member of the Maylands Mt Lawley Uniting Church, has stated many times that he enjoys getting involved and contributing to his congregation in whatever way he can, and hopes to be involved and help more with the Worship services.

"Just ask and listen to us to find out how to help us, involve us and allow us to contribute more fully in church life," suggests Robbie

Gill, Robbie's Mum, agrees and says Robbie, like any other person, is very aware spiritually and experiences God's love as deeply. He loves to share his Christian faith with others in the church and Gill

encourages Robbie's involvement in his congregation. She recommends one way to involve people with disability in the congregation is to invite them to nominate and (if possible*) join the Church Council. Or to be a disability advocate in their congregation or in other Councils and Committees of the Uniting Church. This involvement will ensure that the goals and outcomes of the WA Synod Disability Policy and the Action Plan are focussed on, put into practice and followed up across the Uniting Church in WA.

*Noting that some people with disabilities are very dependent on other people getting them to and from meetings, particularly in the evenings.

Join the new Synod Disability Working Group!

To develop a relevant and fit for purpose Action Plan, the members of the Disability Synod Task Group would like to invite those of you

who have a lived experience of disability and/or have an interest in supporting the development of this DA&I Plan as a member or participant in the Uniting Church, to join our new Working Group.

We hope to have a broad representation to ensure these resources are appropriate and will achieve the desired goals and outcomes of the Plan. The Working Group will meet as required in person or via Zoom and when new information/resources are being developed we can circulate documents to be worked on via email and complete a lot of the work this way.

Please contact Cindy Gorton, cindy.gorton@wa.uca.org.au or Amanda Rigby, amanda.rigby@wa.uca.org.au or phone the Church office on 9260 9800 to speak to one of us directly. The Disability Access and Inclusion Policy can be found on the UCWA website: unitingchurchwa.org.au/culture-of-safety

An Interfaith Litany for Wholeness

Leader: Let us pray for all God's people. For people who are blind and cannot see, and for those who can see but are blind to people around them.

Response: God, in your mercy, help us touch each other.

Leader: For people who move slowly because of accident, illness or disability, and for those who move too fast to be aware of the world in which they live,

Response: God, in your mercy, help us work together.

Leader: For people who are deaf and cannot hear, and for those who can hear but who ignore the cries of others,

Response: God, in your mercy, help us respond to each other.

Leader: For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance,

Response: God, in your mercy, help us to grow in your wisdom.

Leader: For people who have a chronic illness for which there is no known cure or relief, and for people who live in unholy fear of developing a chronic illness,

Response: God, in your mercy help us and heal us.

Leader: For families, friends and caregivers who serve people with disabilities, and for those who feel awkward in their presence,

Response: God, in your mercy, help us see each other with your eyes.

Leader: For people who think they are worthless and beyond your love, and for people who think they don't need your love,

Response: God in your mercy help us accept your love.

Leader: For people who feel isolated by their disability, and for people who contribute to that sense of isolation,

Response: God, in your mercy, change our lives.

Leader: For all the people in your creation, that we may learn to respect each other and learn how to live together in your peace,

Response: God, in your mercy, bind us together.

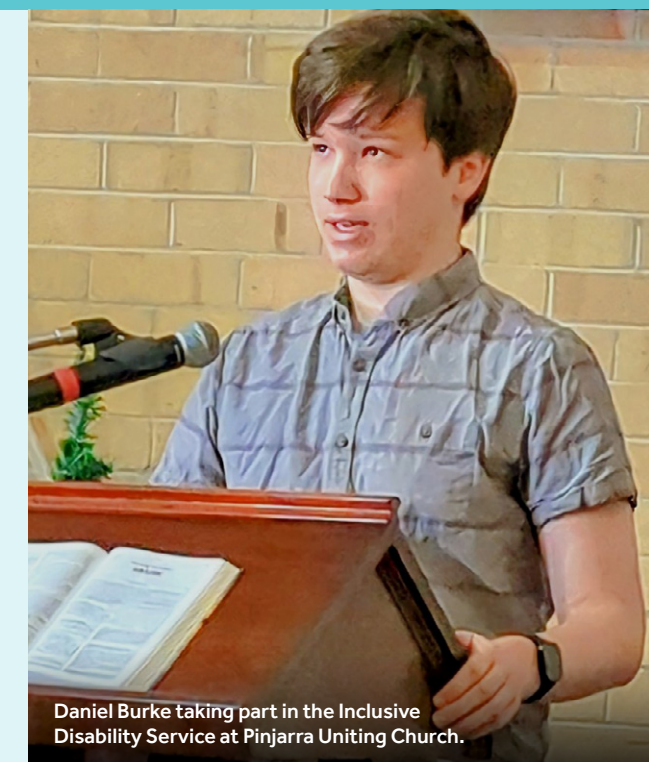
All: Amen

Written by Rev. Kate Chipps and adapted by Ginny Thornburgh. Reproduced with permission from: That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities, National Organization on Disabilities.

Save the date

Celebrate International Day of People with Disabilities with a disability inclusive worship service

The International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) is held every year on 3 December. The day is to celebrate and raise awareness of people with disability and promotes the equitable inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of life.



Daniel Burke taking part in the Inclusive Disability Service at Pinjarra Uniting Church.

The Disability Royal Commission Synod Task Group, as part of its mission to promote disability awareness, invites congregations, agencies and schools to actively celebrate and raise awareness of this annual International Day by holding an inclusive Disability Awareness Day Worship Service on a Sunday close to 3 December.

Pinjarra Uniting Church organised a very successful inclusive Disability Worship service in January 2024 which was well received by everyone there and also inspired the Disability Synod Task Group to add this type of activity to the Disability Action Plan as a very practical and visible demonstration of disability access and inclusion in our church.

The Pinjarra Worship team designed the Inclusive Service so that three people with disability, current and former members of Pinjarra Uniting Church, spoke from their perspective about their journey of faith, roles in the church and experience of belonging to the Pinjarra church community, in place of the usual sermon.

Trevor Thomas explained he was inspired to organise a Disability Inclusive Service after the last Synod meeting in which the Disability Access and Inclusion Policy was approved. He went back to Pinjarra to suggest it would be nice to organise a different type of service which included people with a disability. He said "it went down extremely well, opened people's eyes and caused some to ask how are we really including people with disability in our church life".

Congratulations are due to Trevor and the rest of the Pinjarra Worship team for leading the way in proactive disability accessible and inclusive practices in the Uniting Church.



IDPWD Disability Inclusive Worship Resources

The 2024 theme is "Transformative Solutions for Inclusive Development: the role of Innovation in Fuelling an Accessible and Equitable World"

Visit the IDPWD website www.ipdwd.org later in the year for information, materials and promotional ideas. For example, the colour purple and its symbolism has been adopted by IDPWD. By using the colour purple during this day, individuals and organisations show their commitment to promoting inclusivity and equality for people with disabilities.

Resources are being developed to support congregations, agencies and schools to arrange a service in a way which includes people with disabilities in the design, organisation and/or participation in whatever way they want or are able to and these will be made available in the coming months. The 'Interfaith Litany for Wholeness' on page 18 is an example of a prayer that could be included in your worship service.

The Uniting Church in Australia, *Assembly Disability Access Guidelines* remind us that "involving people with disability in the planning of the event will help you to have an event that is as accessible as possible."



More than a roof

Melissa Crompton, Uniting WA

Her digital watch buzzes, piercing the tranquil silence of the living room. It is a quarter past three. Sunlight slants through the curtains, casting long shadows. Bernie, hunched over a framed board continues to etch at her scratch board, with careful precision, a rabbit slowly reveals itself. This art form is new to her, a practice only picked up in the last few years. But Bernie has always had eyes that observe the world and hands to sketch it.

If you were to cast a discerning gaze about her home, it would present an image reminiscent of countless others - a quintessential West Australian unit filled with comfort and personality (which comes alive with her collection of hats and merchandise). Yet, amidst this semblance of familiarity, a few differences emerge that are pivotal to Bernie. You see, prior to living here, Bernie was homeless and had been for over 40 years.

At 14, Bernie decided to flee from her home, seeking an escape from the turmoil plaguing her young life. Her childhood was marred by sexual abuse from the tender age of seven. Her pleas for help were ignored. A home life that should have provided comfort and safety became a source of fear and uncertainty, driving her to seek refuge in the numbing embrace of alcohol and drugs. Bernie's experiences as a child and beyond took a heavy toll on her

mental health. A toll that Bernie still pays to this day - and one that has made leaving homelessness, through share houses or public housing, exceedingly challenging.

For 40 years, Bernie was stuck in a relentless cycle of finding temporary refuge only to lose it again and again. But today, she's been living in her home for four years, and uses her story to advocate for people in similar situations.

So, what changed?

A subtle shift unveiled itself within Bernie. A well of inner fortitude sprung, allowing Bernie to address her challenges. It was a turning point when she began confronting her experiences and the very things that had once provided solace. She embarked on a transformative journey through rehab, counselling and attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).

During this change, while living in a hostel, Bernie was referred to the Independent Living Program (ILP) offered by Uniting WA. This program, unlike her fleeting experiences of shelters in the past, promised not just a roof, but a support system - a landlord model imbued with understanding, a dedicated caseworker to navigate the complexities of maintaining a home.

What does ILP look like for Bernie? Her lease comes with a degree of flexibility you would not often find in the market. For example, instead of worrying about rent increases driven by external market forces, her rent is set as a percentage of her income. And the ritual of her rent inspections is rather different.

Instead of the anxiety-inducing clipboard-wielding stranger silently scrutinising every corner, her inspections are a conversation with someone who trusts her

Like all souls, Bernie finds solace in the presence of a confidant, a sympathetic ear who can offer guidance and steer her when she needs support.

judgement to ensure the property is maintained and that it continues to meet Bernie's needs.

While we can all turn to the internet to seek answers, there is a unique comfort in seeking support from trusted individuals such as a partner, parents, children, friends, or colleagues. For Bernie, her sanctuary lies in the steadfast support of her dedicated case

manager, a beacon of commitment to embolden her pursuit of autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Bernie's mental health challenges will never go away, but they can be managed. Bernie devotes herself to the cultivation of her mental well-being and keenly recognises the indispensable role of a considerate community:

"What I would like you to know is that a place to stay is good, but just because you have a roof over your head, it's not the end of homelessness, it's just a first step. Homeless people need services - like mental health or legal help or social workers. So that they can have the help to get over what made them homeless in the first place."

The Path Home

With the causes of homelessness proliferating alongside its already pervasive presence, Uniting WA are receiving hundreds of requests for support across our services daily. This model of support is right for Bernie and the 209 other ILP clients, but it's not right for everyone who might experience homelessness.

So, what are the solutions for different people?

You can learn more about them at our upcoming exhibition 'The Path Home'. Uniting WA has partnered with renowned photographer Jarrad Seng with the aim of taking you beyond the headlines of homelessness, bringing you closer to the stories and solutions.

'The Path Home' will feature the portraits of six people with different lived experiences of homelessness and at various stages on their journeys home.

We believe that by understanding the solutions, you can help us build a brighter future for those needing support in these unprecedented times. Together, we can do more.

The exhibition is free, and open from 26 August 2024 at QV1 in the Perth CBD.





Formation for All

Rev Dr Cathie Lambert

From the age of five until I began my first job as a school teacher, I was part of the Girls' Brigade. I began as a cadet at Alan Road Methodist Church in England and finished up as a leader in the 3rd Perth Greenwood Company attached to the Uniting Church where I attended. There are numerous camps, programs and people who have been part of my spiritual formation over the years, but Girls' Brigade was a constant in my early years to which I now attribute much of my learning and development. Girls' Brigade provided a safe environment for me to question, fail and try again. The program included practical skills and crafts, learning about faith and the Bible, getting outdoors to develop confidence in the world around me and my ability to navigate my way through it, exposure to different cultures and ways of thinking, and development of leadership skills. For me, being a member of the Girls' Brigade was an 18-year formation program.

This article is not intended to be a promotional piece for the Girls' Brigade, but rather an exploration of formation and the many guises it may take. At the recent Presbytery of WA meeting, the Perth Theological Hall was renamed the Uniting Centre for Education and Formation. Many of us will be

familiar with the term 'education' having worked through systems of primary school, secondary school and, perhaps, tertiary courses. Formation, however, is not a word used so much in secular circles. To find consensus in defining Christian formation or spiritual formation is an almost impossible task. I do not

intend to propose my own definition within the space of this article, but instead will address some common misconceptions about formation which I believe are not helpful.

The first misconception I wish to address is a limited view of who formation may exist for. The term 'formation' is rightly used to

describe the process undertaken by candidates for specified ministries in the Uniting Church. Recently, however, I have heard comments indicating that these are the only people who embark on formation. My response – formation is for everyone! Certainly there are specific programs and courses that are focused on certain ministries. Formation, however, is the work of every follower of Jesus. We are all in process, on a journey of being continually formed.

At this point the question could be asked, 'Formed into what?' This highlights the second misconception - formation leads to conforming. A cookie-cutter approach to formation may lead to orthopraxy and orthodoxy but does not provide much space for how God's Spirit may be moving in the lives of people. There may be some particular requirements for some specified ministries, however formation is not about becoming less yourself. It's about becoming more the person God created you to be. Some use

the language of becoming more Christ-like or having the mind of Christ. This does not diminish the gifts and skills that each of us bring to our own ministries. As Dallas Willard describes, "Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were you." In deepening our relationship with God in formation, I am convinced we also deepen our knowing of ourselves and discover our own giftedness and place in the world.

There is, however, a danger in focusing on the individual nature of formation. Although each of our journeys will differ and have its unique twists and turns, formation occurs in community. We are born to be in relationship and the Christian faith is based on a Trinitarian, relational God. Formation, at its best, occurs when we bump up against each other. To quote Dallas Willard again, "Spiritual formation cannot, in the nature of the case, be a 'private' thing, because it is a matter of whole-life transformation. You need to seek out others in your community who are pursuing the renovation of the heart."

My experience of formation throughout my life has involved communities of people in the Girls' Brigade, in my local churches, in the villages where I lived in Tonga, with my spiritual director, with my family, and with numerous other people in a variety of places.

The newly named Uniting Centre for Education and Formation hopes to provide a formational space to add to those already in your lives. We hope to create opportunities for people to gather in community, explore their relationship with God and grow in mind and spirit. We encourage you to look out for upcoming events and not view them as opportunities for a select group – but for all seeking to deepen their faith. The work of formation is the "renovation of all our hearts" which together can bring transformation to our communities.

Rev Dr Cathie Lambert is the Formation and Learning Culture Co-ordinator with the Uniting Church in WA.





PLC Students Payten, Emma, Maggie, Sabrina and Matilda.



PLC Perth Build Bikes for Foster Children

Jasmine Kimlin

Amidst the bustle of Term 2, Year 9 students at PLC Perth took on a heartwarming challenge—building bikes for children in foster care. This initiative, part of PLC’s innovative Year 9 Service Leadership Programme, aimed to bring joy to children in need.

The programme started with around 20 children in Western Australian foster care choosing their desired bikes, carefully considering the right size and, most importantly, their favourite colours. With this in mind, PLC students formed small groups to construct bikes of various sizes to order. Although the assembly process was sometimes challenging, the students were motivated

by the thought of the children’s excitement upon receiving their new bikes.

Finally, the foster children and their families visited PLC for a special event where the students presented the completed bikes. The children’s faces lit up with smiles as they eagerly took their new bikes for a spin.

This meaningful partnership with Foster Care WA is one of nine service portfolios managed by the Year 9 students, under the guidance of Mrs Susie Gill, Head of Service and Community Partnerships. Each year, the outgoing Year 9 cohort passes on these portfolios to the incoming class, ensuring the legacy of community service continues.

“It’s heartwarming to see the pure joy on their faces, and our students can really see how they are making a positive impact,” Mrs. Gill remarked.



St Stephen’s School Heart for the Homeless

Fairlea Baxter

Unless you’ve experienced homelessness, it’s impossible to imagine the true toll it has on a person. The fear associated with sleeping rough, the uncertainty of knowing where your next meal will come from, this insecurity is made even worse during a harsh winter. With homelessness increasing across Australia and Western Australia, SonshineFM’s Heart for the Homeless campaign has become even more important.

Running for the past 6 years the campaign gathers donations of sleeping bags, blankets and hygiene products. St Stephen’s School is proud to be a campaign partner, receiving donations at the Carramar and Duncraig campuses. The donations received from the community filled the large boxes left at the school with parents taking their children on special shopping

trips to select backpacks and sleeping bags for those doing it tough.

St Stephen’s School was part of a larger network of sites that saw 11,259 items donated, making it the most successful Heart for the Homeless on record. With so many items it was going to take many hands to sort through everything and a group of St Stephen’s School students lent a hand as part of their service-learning curriculum.

Year 7 student Madison Brown was one of the students, she said the experience was absolutely wonderful “I was so happy that I could experience something that was quite fun, and I got to help those in poverty this winter.”

The experience has left an indelible mark on Madison, “I’ve realised that I am so fortunate for the things I have and my clothes and shelter and even food. I was never as grateful as I am now. I think that we all need to look from someone else’s perspective on the things we receive and the things we have.” Certainly, a life lesson we can all live by.



Year 7 Olivia sorting clothing as part of her service learning.



Student Madison is grateful for the opportunity to help those doing it tough.



St Stephen’s School students proudly demonstrating their motto ‘Serve God, Serve One Another’

Winter-Warmer – Soup Time! Spearwood Uniting Style

Thanks to Monika Cowell from Spearwood Uniting Church for sharing these winter warmer recipes with us!

While the weather is a bit on the chilly side, hanging onto a cup of hot soup feels good! It has become a regular winter feature at our weekly laundry-and-meal evenings at Spearwood Uniting Church. People coming to our event are usually quite hungry and feel the cold. So we greet them with a cup of hot soup and a crusty bread or pastry to settle their hungry tummies as the meal gets served later. It can also help to break down barriers, make them feel less exposed when new to the venue. It seems to work.

Cooking soup is incredibly easy and can use up any un-used vegies in your fridge. It is made up of fresh, un-processed ingredients without preservatives, a healthy plus! Unlike tin soup, it tastes different every time you cook it. A bit of variety makes food so much more interesting.

Pumpkin Soup

Ingredients

- 1 medium size butternut pumpkin cut up in small cubes without the peel
- 1 small potato (optional)
- 2 tablespoons of olive (or any other cooking) oil
- 1 medium yellow onion chopped
- 1 teaspoon of salt or vegetable soup stock powder
- 3 garlic cloves chopped
- 1 teaspoon of grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon of ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon cardamon
- Freshly ground pepper
- Cream or full fat coconut milk
- Water as needed

Method

1. Fry the chopped onions and garlic with little oil lightly (they should not get brown). Add all the spices and stir briefly to get the aroma of the spices stronger.
2. Add all the pumpkin cubes and add water or coconut milk until all the pumpkin pieces are almost covered. Simmer for about 20 minutes until the pumpkin is very soft.
3. Put the soup through a blender or use a blender stick in the soup pot.
4. Add more salt and spices if needed. If you cooked with water, add some cream just before serving.



Potato-Roesti

This Roesti is an absolute favourite with any cooking at our church. No matter how much we cook of it, there are no left-overs!

You can make it a fun social family affair at home by having everybody eat out of the baking dish (not suitable for public events for hygiene reasons).

This dish is easy to prepare in advance and low in cost. Once prepared and put in the oven, you have time for other things while it is baking.

To make it a complete balanced meal, you can add vegetables underneath. Frozen vegetables work well for this, just let them thaw out before putting them on the oiled baking dish, adding some salt. You can also add chopped onions, garlic granules, bacon, ham or tuna to the potatoes.

Ingredients

- 2kg potatoes cooked
- 125 grated parmesan cheese
- 250g+ grated Tasty or Mozzarella cheese
- Oil or butter
- Herbs (mixed herbs or Italian herb mix)
- Spices without much salt (garlic granules)

Method

1. Cook the potatoes, let them cool
2. Peel and grate all the potatoes, mix them with the parmesan cheese herbs and spices (caution, the parmesan cheese makes it quite salty already)
3. Oil a baking dish and spread the potato mix in an even layer.
4. Generously sprinkle grated Tasty or Mozzarella cheese over the top
5. Add more herbs and spices
6. Bake 230C for 20-30 min until the cheese gets lightly coloured, crisp

This can be cooked as a side dish or a meal together with a salad.



From the Archives... The Gladstone Bag and other treasures



Wendy Hendry

Many of our readers will be familiar with the classic Gladstone Bag. The original bag was designed by a leather maker in London, J G Beard, in 1854 and named after the then British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone who was known for his love of travelling. The bag soon became widely used by doctors of the day, popular for its spacious and sturdy design. Over time the bags were used by tradespeople and travellers alike.

The Gladstone Bag was a staple in Australian history and many would fondly recall them and perhaps even owned one and used it for work, school, or church business. The bags were often used by Ministers and Church Council office bearers. For this reason there are a few found in the Uniting Church WA Archive as they were a great way to safely store papers, records and other mementos.

One great example of a Gladstone Bag (pictured) in the Archive is engraved with its owner's name – R.B.A. for the Reverend Barry Angus – and was used in the late 1940s and early 1950's. It also turns out that Rev Angus was also an Archive volunteer from 1995 to 2001!

Another popular piece of luggage at the time was the hard case. In the Archive there is a hard case by Airlight Travel Goods which was used by the Pinjarra Methodist Ladies Guild to securely house their records. The Pinjarra case held annual reports, correspondence and minutes for the Methodist Ladies Guild and Pinjarra Uniting Church Adult Fellowship.

There is a Wembley Uniting Church case which held records for the Wembley Sunday School and contained records from the 1970's and 1980's. Items included attendance lists, correspondence, annual reports and minutes from Sunday School Teacher's meetings.

Another hard case in the Archive was discovered containing treasures from Kukerin Sunday School and covers the time period of 1944 to the 1970's. Inside was an old drawstring calico bag, financial statements, a Wagin Circuit meeting agenda, an old cash book of Kukerin Church 1944 to 1966, and other similar items. They all provide an insight into life in Kukerin during this time period and have survived quite well in this sturdy case.

Marissa Krajcar, Uniting Church Archivist says that these are examples of what Archivists call 'benign neglect', meaning that the records have survived for a long period of time, despite no action having been taken in the interim. This is also where paper records differ to digital records, which demand considerable upkeep to ensure their survival.

Does your congregation have a Gladstone Bag or sturdy case full of interesting records that may be suitable for our Uniting Church Archive?



Unexpected Win for the U Team at the State Youth Games 2024

Vaughan Chin, Adele Williams and Julie Ridden

In June, the U Team won the Compassion Cup at the State Youth Games in Bunbury. This unexpected win was a welcome surprise for our Uniting Church team, having returned to the games after a three-year break.

The State Youth Games are an annual event held over the June long weekend at the Southwest Sports Centre in Bunbury.

Established in 1987 by Youth Vision WA as part of the Ministry of the Churches of Christ, the event seeks to bring young people together to play sports in a friendly, respectful environment, reflecting the values we see in Christ. Admission to the games is via a registered church group, as team and relationship building is an important aspect to the tournament.

In 2012, Nedlands Uniting Church became a registered group and entered the competition and won the Small Church Competition. This team quickly became the U Team, fielding a team from multiple Uniting Church congregations. The largest U Team participation was in 2018, with a team of seventy.

The U Team had a brief hiatus returning to the State Youth Games this year with a team of eleven young adults, one teenager and three support adults. People aged between sixteen and thirty are eligible to compete.

Our small team participated in indoor soccer, badminton, tennis, beach volleyball, volleyball, Settlers of Catan, Just Dance, Mario Kart, ten pin bowling, pickleball and bucket golf. These are but a few of the sports and games on offer. There are events for everyone, the sporty and not so sporty.

Each year there is a different biblical theme designed for church groups to be able to use throughout the year with their youth and young adults. Teams create their own t-shirt to reflect this theme. This year the theme was Good News.

The U Team is indebted to the support of St Augustine's Uniting Church in Bunbury who provide accommodation in their church. This is an enormous blessing, and we thank them for their generous annual hospitality.

It was a great time of friendly competition and fellowship.

Winning the men's badminton doubles and the Compassion cup, which is the greatest number of points per person compared to the size of the team, was a great outcome for such a small team.

The U Team looks forward to competing into the future and would love to have other Uniting Churches become involved. Start talking to your young people about State Youth Games 2025. Please contact Julie Ridden for more details - julie.ridden@wa.edu.org.au



Margaret River Refugee Actions and Support

Mary Elton

Margaret River UCA Congregation is proud to be part of the local community that strongly supports refugees. At a recent Refugee Week function held at the Uniting Church, the Augusta-Margaret River Shire President, Julia Meldrum, reminded the 90 people present, that the shire has been a signatory to the Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration since 2015.

The Margaret River Welcome Community Supporters Group showed the documentary Watandar My Countryman, where the makers of the documentary, Jolson Hoff and Muzafar Ali, zoomed in for a chat beforehand. The seven members of the Khan family, refugees from

Afghanistan, who are now living in Margaret River supported by this group, enjoyed attending the evening. It was a pleasure to be able to meet them, as well as enjoy their chai tea! They expressed their appreciation of the support in being able to come to Australia and they still have concerns for members of their family still in a refugee camp.

Kay Dowling, Chairperson of the Margaret River Congregation described the evening as "such a wonderful example of real community engagement and development. We are enriched by being part of this."

During Refugee Week our local Uniting Church held a church service which focussed on prayers for refugees, followed by a shared soup and stories lunch on Sunday. This included a short video called 'When

I Came By Boat'. It was very powerful video, and reminds us all that with the freedom we have in Australia, it also brings responsibilities.

The congregation is also able to support the 'Celebrate Palestine SW Group' by providing a venue for their meetings and future fundraising event.



Refugee Week movie night at Margaret River UC.



Refugee Week soup and stories lunch.

Star Street Celebrates Pentecost

Rev Bev Fabb

Star Street Uniting Church celebrated Pentecost Sunday this year by receiving 15 new members by adult baptism, confirmation and transfer from other churches.

The service began with a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country by a Noongar elder who was joining the congregation. People received into membership included people from Noongar, Filipino, Indonesian

and Singaporean Chinese cultural backgrounds and who came from Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist and Salvation Army, as well as Uniting Church worshipping traditions. One person received as Confirmed Member lives in Thailand but participates regularly in worship at Star Street via Zoom.

Rev John Atkinson in his sermon on the day reminded the congregation

that at Pentecost the barriers between people of different cultures and languages were broken down and they were all united in the Christian Church. The service was filled with joyful singing. Following the service the congregation shared cupcakes decorated by the children of Star Street to celebrate the birthday of the Church.

It was a spirit-filled intergenerational and intercultural celebration!



Some WA members of 17th Assembly (l-r): Rev Reuben Edmonds, Maggie Johns, Rev Ivan Clark, Alison Xamon, Sue Strutt, Rev Luke Williams, Fiona Bentley, Mark Brisbane, Lillian Tahaafe-Williams. Photo by UCA Assembly.

17th Assembly Summary Available

The 17th Assembly meeting of the Uniting Church in Australia took place in Parramatta, NSW over six days from 11 to 16 July. The theme for the 17th Assembly is 'Threads of Love: Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures & Boundaries.'

More than 200 members from around the country, including 21 from Western Australia, came together on Burrumattagal land to do the business of the triennial Assembly. You can read a full summary of the meeting, with links to all of the stories, photos and videos on the UCA website <https://uniting.church/assembly-full-summary>

Reflection

Threads of Grace

Rob Douglas

Three years in my role as Presbytery Minister for Mission seem to have flown by and the time has come for me to reflect on what this means and to notice the threads of grace that have been woven through my life and ministry.

Mission Planning. Some groups saw mission planning as a burden because we asked for a mission plan as part of the process of accessing embargoed funds to carry out much-needed maintenance on church property. But as I worked with congregations and faith communities, helping them to discover the mission of God in their neighbourhoods and begin to set new directions for the future I sensed the presence of God in opening us up to fresh opportunities.

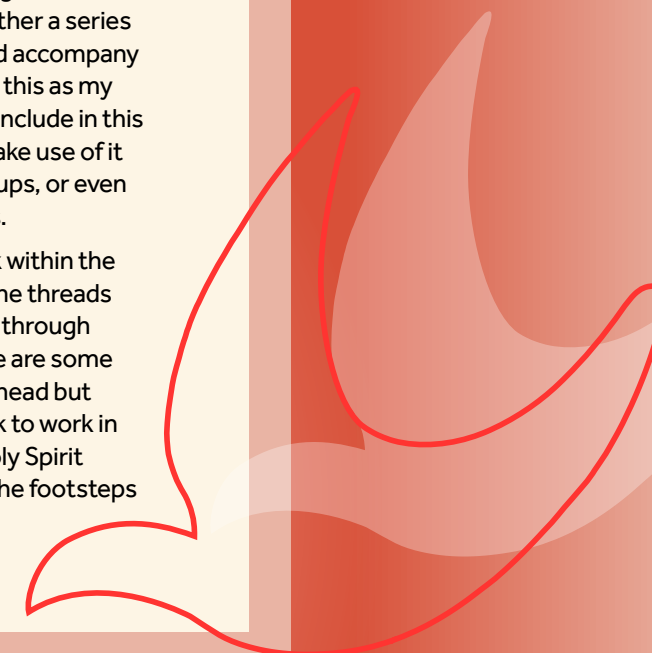
Welcoming. I long to see the church of the 21st century opening up to the wider community and finding new ways to make itself more accessible. The workshop "Becoming a Welcoming Community" was an opportunity to work through some practical steps that would help local congregations to clear the path of debris that had for so long been a hindrance to newcomers to the church. So much more needs to be done in this area, but I was privileged to see the lights turning on for many.

Listening Journeys. Edging towards the end of my time in the role I found myself leading what we called "Listening Journeys". This was a delight as I shared with representatives of the Pastoral Relations Committee and Thrive Mission Committee in hearing stories

from small and large congregations and faith communities both the joys and challenges of being God's people in their respective neighbourhoods. Apart from the stories themselves I was overwhelmed by the power of listening and the impact that has on both the hearer and those who are telling their stories.

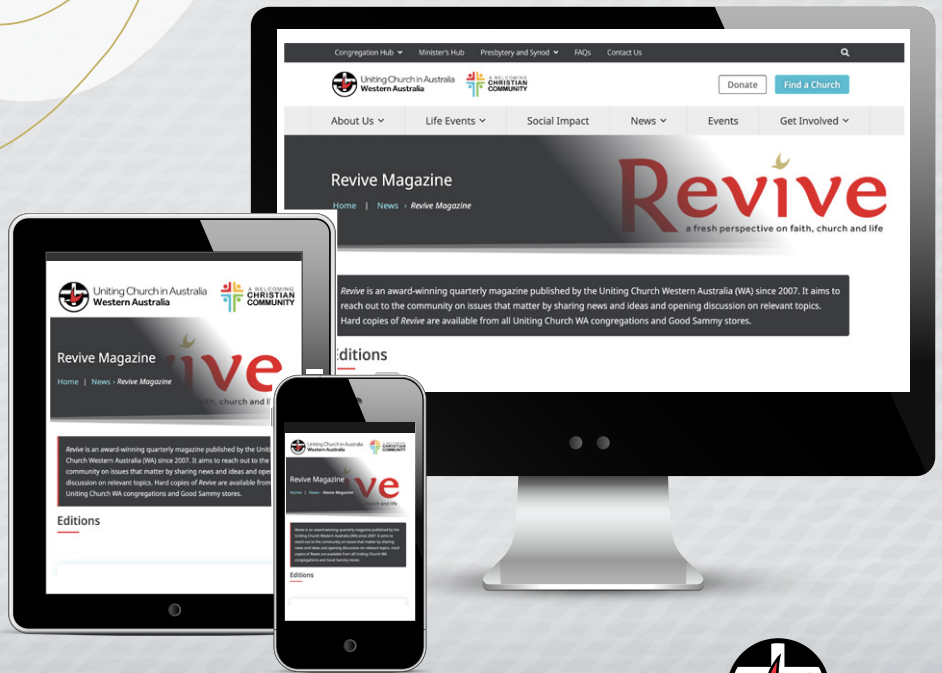
Discipleship. When I had a year left in my term I asked God what legacy I should leave the church and it seemed that he was saying that discipleship and disciple-making was my highest priority. I wrote the workshop "Toward a Culture of Disciple-making" and was delighted to see the impact that it had on so many. I then set about turning this into an online interactive learning guide and began working with Don Dowling in putting together a series of short films that would accompany the learning guide. I see this as my gift to the church as I conclude in this role and invite you to make use of it individually, in small groups, or even as whole congregations.

It has been a joy to work within the Presbytery and notice the threads of grace that are woven through the whole church. There are some significant challenges ahead but there is hope as we seek to work in partnership with the Holy Spirit and continue to follow the footsteps of Jesus.



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unitingchurchwa.org.au



Uniting Church in Australia
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* Not all schools offer Pre Kindergarten.